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# WHAT CHRISTIANITY SAYS ABOUT SEX, LOVE, AND MARRIAGE

ROLAND H. BAINTON

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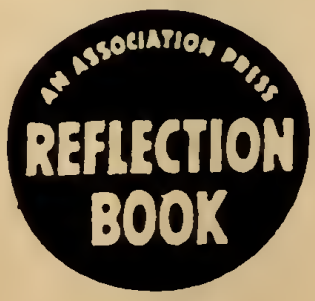


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# WHAT CHRISTIANITY SAYS ABOUT SEX, LOVE, AND MARRIAGE

CHAPTER ONE

# FUNDAMENTALS OF MARRIAGE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Christian churches have taken an undeviating and undivided stand with regard to the fundamentals of marriage, however much they have diverged on points less crucial. To begin with, they have held that marriage is good and sex is not defiling.

## Christianity's Heritage from Judaism

The inheritance of Christianity from Judaism was a positive attitude toward life. God saw that his creation was good. He brought into being the primal pair and gave them the command to be fruitful and multiply. Not even the most extreme Christian ascetics have taken a wholly negative attitude toward life, nor have they ever condemned marriage for others even though they had chosen for themselves a vocation of celibacy. Sex is one

of God's endowments, and procreation is one of his commands. Neither is to be exercised promiscuously. Christianity, like Judaism, set itself sternly against those cults which used sex as a device for exciting emotional upheavals in the interests of religion. Promiscuity was never condoned, because sex is not to be indulged for private gratification apart from social responsibility.

The system of marriage was monogamous, and the saying of the Pastoral Epistles that a bishop should be the husband of one wife (I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6) certainly does not mean, as some in Christian history have held, that other Christians might have more, but rather that the bishop should not have been married a second time. There have been admittedly in Christian history occasional lapses into polygamy as in the case of the Anabaptists at Muenster and of the Mormons. Such aberrations have been due to the incubus of certain passages in the Old Testament, because Judaism prior to the Babylonian Exile was not monogamous. In the early period Jacob had Leah and Rachel. Curiously, however, in the later

church the classical example of bigamy was that of Lamech because of the reference to Adah and Zillah as wives of Lamech (Genesis 4:19). The polygamy of David and Solomon need scarcely be mentioned, but in addition there was also concubinage, and Abraham alongside of Sarah had also Hagar. The Judaism of New Testament times had become monogamous, although the Mishna permitted eighteen wives to a king and as many as four or five to a commoner. Even in the second century Justin Martyr could reproach Trypho the Jew with this provision.[1] All the more, then, the behavior of the patriarchs was an embarrassment to Christians who retained the Old Testament and rejected many of its practices. The common explanation was a distinction between historical dispensations. Still what God had once favored could not be absolutely wrong and if the condition recurred which formerly warranted the practice, might it not then be revived? Some Christians argued that the immoralities of the patriarchs were due to a special revelation no longer vouchsafed.

[1] All footnotes appear at the end of the book.

But recurrent Christian groups, committed to the continuance of revelation, did not exclude the possibility of new divine authorizations. This was the basis on which the Anabaptists at Muenster revived polygamy. For the most part, however, the patriarchs were revered but not imitated by the church. And not uncommonly their derelictions were rendered innocuous through allegory.[2] Save, then, for occasional exceptions, the Christian church throughout her history has insisted on monogamy.

## Marriage—a Lifetime Relationship

The marriage relationship is for life. Here Christianity markedly departed from the Old Testament where divorce was freely conceded solely on the ground of the husband's displeasure (Deuteronomy 24: 1-3), but our Lord in commenting upon this provision declared that Moses allowed divorce because of the hardness of men's hearts. In the beginning of the creation, it was not so: God made Adam and Eve to be one flesh and the union should be indissoluble; on which account for either

party to put away the other and remarry constituted adultery. This is the version in the Gospel of Mark (Chapter 10), but Matthew introduced one exception in that divorce was permissible on the ground of adultery (Chapter 19). These passages make perfectly plain that divorce was considered, if not absolutely inadmissible, at any rate thoroughly deplorable. On this point all Christians have been agreed.

But as to whether divorce may be allowed and for what reasons, the passages cited leave room for diversity of interpretation. The problem is to know whether Jesus condemned or commended Moses. A distinction is plainly drawn, and it is the only passage where it is drawn, between an ideal state in the Garden of Eden and a lower condition consequent apparently upon the fall. Since the age of innocence had passed away, conceivably Jesus meant to say that Moses was right in making a concession to the hardness of men's hearts. The point might be, however, that Christians should return to the standards of Paradise, leaving the world to take advantage of Moses' relaxation.

Infidelity to the marriage bond is strongly condemned quite as much for the man as for the woman. This was a Christian heritage from Judaism. The Old Testament visited the extreme penalty upon infidelity. One of the Ten Commandments enjoins, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). And a law of Leviticus enacts that if a man defile his neighbor's wife both offenders shall die (Leviticus 20:10). There was here no double standard. Significantly defection from the religion of Israel was most commonly characterized as adultery (Jeremiah 3:8 and Ezekiel 16:32).

## Sexual Perversions Condemned

Sexual perversions were stoutly condemned. Here again the Church appropriated the tradition of Judaism. Sodomy, which included both homosexuality and intercourse with animals, was outlawed by the Old Testament. The very term sodomy was derived from the behavior of the men of Sodom who proposed to violate Lot's male guests (Genesis 19:5). Deuteronomy enacted that there should be "no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor

a sodomite of the sons of Israel" (23:17). The reference is to sacred prostitution and its male counterpart in connection with the temple. Such remnants of the cult of the fertility gods, the Baalim, were not extirpated in Israel until Josiah "brake down the houses of the sodomites" (2 Kings 23:7). Specific legislation against homosexuality is found in Leviticus 18:22 and against relations with beasts in Exodus 22:19 where the penalty is death.[3]

The laxities condoned in Greek society were never countenanced by the Church. The hetairai could not be recognized and those guilty of pederasty could not inherit the kingdom of God. At this point we are cautioned, however, by a distinguished historian of Greek culture to beware of exaggeration with regard to the prevalence of the vice. Werner Jaeger in his *Paideia* contends that it originated at Sparta and with the waning of Spartan prestige came into disrepute. The transition is observable between the *Symposium* of Plato and the *Laws* where the practice is condemned.[4] Granted, however, that the moralists came to discountenance the perversion, this does not prove

that actually it was discontinued, and if the practice had really ceased to be prevalent one cannot understand why the New Testament writers should have felt the need to speak so sharply against it (I Corinthians 6:9 cf. Galatians 5:19).

The Church then from the outset and throughout her history and in the midst of her own divisions has consistently taught that marriage is good, ordained of God for the propagation of the race, sex is not evil, marriage should be to a single partner and for life. Both parties are obligated to be faithful to the bond.

## Three Attitudes Toward Marriage

With this common ground, diversities of emphasis were possible and have occurred. Sometimes, to be sure, the variations have become aberrations and, though claiming to be Christian, have been condemned by the Church at large. But apart from eccentricities there have been diversities, all validly Christian. They consist in an overemphasis upon some legitimate aspect of marriage. In an ideal relationship, all the variants are combined.

Broadly speaking, three main attitudes have emerged. The first may be called the *sacramental.* It stresses the points already mentioned that marriage is a religious relationship requiring an exclusive commitment for life. There are two purposes of marriage: one is propagation, and the other is "as a remedy for sin," that the gratification of passion may be restricted to the marriage bond. The term sacramental is applied to this position because of the strongly religious emphasis rather than because of the specific doctrine that marriage is a visible sign of an invisible grace. Christians have been divided on whether to consider marriage a sacrament in this narrower sense. Certainly it is not to be so regarded because thus named in the New Testament, since the use of the term at this point is a mistranslation. The Epistle to the Ephesians (5:32) compares the relation of husband and wife to that of Christ and the Church and adds that this is a *mysterion.* The Latin incorrectly rendered this Greek word as *sacramentum.*

The second view of marriage is *romantic* which regards love between the sexes as ennobling. The

woman is well-nigh worshiped, and her excellencies are believed to be transmitted to her devotee. The suitor is her champion, her servant, and her slave. Falling in love is a prerequisite for marriage. This is not necessarily so in the sacramental type which is entirely compatible with unions arranged by the family. Unhappily, the corollary of the romantic view is that falling out of love may be a sufficient ground for ceasing to be married. This type, then, makes for refinement and tenderness, but it may be a source of instability.

The third view is the *companionable* where the emphasis is placed upon partnership in a common set of ideals and aspirations and a common endeavor. There is a partnership, of course, in the bearing and rearing of children, and, in addition, Christian parents have a common enterprise in the service of the Church. In secularized form, stress is laid upon a community of tastes and activities as a prerequisite for marriage, whether it be music, art, drama, golf, or fishing. Companionability is certainly one of the valid aspects of marriage and its deliberate cultivation enriches the relationship.

Again, the corollary is possible that if, after marriage, tastes alter, the union may be dissolved.

These three belong together. Marriage is ordained of God and imposes an obligation before God upon all who embark upon it. Marriage is refined by that quality of love which is a romantic attachment. Marriage is invested with meaning and interest if the partners have wide community of concerns.

Historically speaking, these three aspects of marriage have been emphasized in chronological sequence. The sacramental came first and is basic for them all. The romantic entered with the Renaissance. Partnership was especially stressed by Puritanism. These positions will now be more fully described in their historical order.

CHAPTER TWO

# THE CHURCH ON SEX AND MARRIAGE IN THE PERIOD OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

## New Testament Views of Marriage

The New Testament develops chiefly the sacramental view. Our Lord, in the passages already cited, referred to the institution of marriage by God at the creation and in turn gave a sanction to marriage by his presence at the wedding at Cana of Galilee. The Epistle to the Hebrews, combatting detractors of marriage, declares the institution to be "honorable in all and the bed undefiled" (13:4). I Timothy (4:3) likewise considers as seductive spirits those who forbid marriage.

At the same time, the mood of the New Testament is heroic, and marriage is one of God's good gifts which may have to be renounced for some more exigent obligation. Every aspect of life is subordinated to the demands of the kingdom of God, for which there may be need to forsake even father

and mother, wife and child (Luke 14:26). References in the Gospels to sex and marital relations are few. There is the saying of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:28) which treats as adultery any impurity of thought. There is the enigmatic reference to those who have made of themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:12). Whether this means that they had literally emasculated themselves or had merely dedicated themselves to celibacy is not clear. The passage was certainly spiritualized by the early church and even by Origen who was alleged to have carried out the implicit injunction to the letter, but who in his extant writings never once refers to this act on his part and places upon the passage a spiritual sense.[5]

The apostle Paul, however, introduced a note of deterrence with regard to marriage. The reason with him was the expectation of the early return of the Lord when there would be no more marrying or giving in marriage. Under these circumstances he took a conservative attitude toward all social relations (I Corinthians 7). Every outward condition was to him indifferent and might well

be continued until the imminent end. Let each, then, remain what he was whether slave or free, married or unmarried. Unions were not to be dissolved because one partner was not of the faith, but new unions preferably were not to be contracted. The Apostle registered a preference for being unmarried like himself because the unmarried were less encumbered and freer to dedicate themselves to the Lord. If, however, there were those who could not contain themselves it were better that they should marry than that they should be tormented by desire. This is the famous text which justified marriage simply as a remedy for sin. Again if any man had a virgin housekeeper, whether or not he should marry depended on his ability to exercise restraint. The reference is to a practice subsequently much cultivated of increasing merit by augmenting temptation. There were so many failures to achieve the merit that the church had to ban the practice. The general tone of this seventh chapter of First Corinthians is permissive rather than exuberant, and even within the marriage bond the counsel is to have as having not

(I Corinthians 7: cf. I Thessalonians 5:3-6). Second marriages were allowed by Paul only as a concession (I Corinthians 7:39-40). The view is at least implicit that marriage may be blessed by the church though virginity is superior. The motive for this attitude was eschatological.

The Book of Revelation went further and suggested a basically non-Christian view, that marriage is defiling. There is a paean of praise for the 144,000 undefiled of women, an elect company who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes (Revelation 14:4).

Romance is not to be found in the New Testament, but there are injunctions to mutual consideration on the part of husband and wife. She is however subordinate to her husband because she was created after him (I Corinthians 11:8-9) or because she was responsible for his fall (I Timothy 2:15-18). Female adornment was disparaged (I Peter 3:3).

## Marriage Subordinated

Paul's discouragement of new marriages because of the Lord's imminent return early lost its relevance since the Lord did not return and the expected date was progressively deferred. Lactantius advanced the time by 200 years and Hippolytus by 300, and there was even hesitancy whether the second advent was to be desired in view of the inescapable prelude of woes. That being the case any discountenancing of marriage on the ground of the shortness of the time was excluded.

But other reasons for disparagement crept in and replaced the eschatological. The second century was marked by an increasing prevalence of the Gnostic disparagement of life in the flesh and specifically of marriage. This attitude already discernible in the New Testament became so marked thereafter as to occasion positive schisms. The Marcionites demanded either celibacy or continence within marriage of all Christians. Satornilus the Gnostic branded marriage and the begetting of children as a work of Satan. Tatian, who was sub-

ject in part to Gnostic tendencies, held that Paul's reluctant concession of marriage was tantamount to condemnation and deservedly so according to Tatian, because marriage is corruption and fornication.[6]

The church Fathers thereupon rallied to the defense of marriage, but at the same time, for reasons of their own reverted to the Pauline deterrence. The increased pressures of persecution supplied urgent reason for shunning all entanglements which might blunt the will to witness. Tertullian, after praising a first marriage, heartily condemned a second with reasons which would equally militate against the first. The argument was that he who is unencumbered will best endure. Soldiers cannot take their wives on campaigns, and are not we also soldiers?[7] Again, why in view of the imminent distress should we wish to bring children into the world?[8] Much of the Fathers' invective against female adornment is a part of the same discipline for martyrdom, and if the wife reply that she must please her husband, the answer is

that the Christian husband is not delighted by the graces which titillate the pagans.[9]

Marriage suffered most, however, because of the growing tendency to regard every measure of self-denial as meritorious. Martyrdom was the supreme example, a second baptism washing away all sins committed since the first. Then came fasting, almsgiving, and celibacy. The "Acts of Paul and Thecla" exalt Thecla's virginity. These Acts ascribe to apostolic preaching the withdrawal of married couples from the marital relationship.[10] Not all Christians were prepared, naturally, to adopt so rigorous a course, and the cleavage therefore became more marked between the elite dedicated to conspicuous renunciations and the ordinary Christians who fulfilled only the precepts and not the counsels of perfection. Eusebius of Caesarea in the days of Constantine well formulated the previous development when he posited two grades of Christian conduct: the first for the laity who might participate in pure marriages, just wars, and in farming, trade, and civic pursuits; and the second for the clergy requiring celibacy, poverty, aloofness

from the world, and complete dedication to God.[11] The only new element in this formulation is the equation of the distinction between the levels of conduct with that between the clergy and the laity.

The age of Constantine served to exalt virginity and depreciate marriage. The reason was that the softening of fiber which ensued with the cessation of persecution precipitated censure in the form of mass withdrawal from community life. The primary object was not to escape from sex but from society, and the cry of the early monastics was not "Get away from women" but "Get away from mankind." Women, however, were of course included among mankind, and flight from the larger category obviously entailed withdrawal from the smaller. Nature then promptly took her revenge in that sex became an obsession. Many of the extravagant mortifications of the flesh were directed toward the quelling of passion. Representatives of the opposite sex were studiously eschewed. When a mother came to visit her seven sons in their desert retreat they shut the door and responded to her remonstrance with the consoling prospect of

reunion in heaven. Even female animals were taboo, and to this day Mount Athos harbors only tomcats.

The literary exponent of the more extreme attitude was St. Jerome. That the withdrawal was not directed primarily against women is evident from his summons to resist every human tie. "Should your little nephew hang on your neck, pay no heed. Should your mother, with ashes on her hair and garments rent, display the breasts at which she nursed you, be adamant. Should your father prostrate himself on the threshold, trample him under your foot and go your way. With dry eyes fly to the standard of the cross. In such cases cruelty is the only true affection."[12] This passage which has commonly been pilloried as savagely inhuman is a free reworking of a speech placed by a pagan rhetorician in the mouth of a soldier, and goes to show the degree to which the Christian monastic thought of himself as a *miles Christi*.[13]

But of course Jerome did include women and wives among those to be forsaken. He went as far as any Christian could in disparaging marriage,

which according to him rates only sixtyfold in comparison with virginity which is reckoned at one hundred. The Creator himself refrained from pronouncing a blessing upon the second day of creation because the number two prefigures marriage. Again only the unclean animals went into the ark two by two. The incompatibility of marriage with religious life was vividly displayed for the wife who is distracted by the care of children and the superintendence of cooks and weavers. "The message comes that her husband is bringing guests, she flutters about. Is the sofa smooth? Is the pavement swept? Are the flowers in the vases? Is the dinner ready? Where amid all this is there room for any thought of God?"[14] The only good of marriage is that it produces virgins.[15]

At the same time Jerome was disillusioned with regard to the expedients employed by the Egyptian monks to cow the flesh. He had made trial of the hermit life. "Sackcloth disfigured my unshapely limbs, and my skin from long neglect had become as black as an Ethiopian's. Tears and groans were my daily portion. Yet, though in my fear of hell

I had consigned myself to this prison where my only companions were scorpions and wild beasts, I often found myself amid bevies of girls. My face was pale, and my frame chilled with fasting; yet my mind was inflamed with desire. Helpless I cast myself at the feet of Jesus." Beating his breasts did not restore tranquillity. The only effective therapeutic proved to be study of Hebrew. He had to fill his mind with a rigorous intellectual discipline,[16] and having done so found the other measures no longer needful. He was thereafter perfectly willing to collaborate with Paula in the work of translating the Scriptures. A certain sublimation was found in transferring eroticism to the religious relationship; and Paula, when her daughter embraced the life of religion, was referred to as the "mother-in-law of God," since her daughter was the bride of Christ.[17]

Chrysostom was to pursue still further the analogy with drastic practical consequences. His young friend Theodore, having resolved upon the monastic life, fell in love with Hermione. Chrysostom remonstrated that having once affianced

himself to Christ, to contract thereafter a human marriage would be adultery.[18] Such a literal treatment of the spiritual relationship was later to become concrete in canon law.

Chrysostom is further of interest because he was the monk who became a bishop and continued in his new office to live in accord with the monastic code. As a bishop he was celibate. Such an example did not of itself establish the rule of clerical celibacy, but did tend to exalt the unmarried state as the ideal even for the secular clergy. At the same time vocationalism was the more distinctly recognized. Chrysostom issued no appeals to all mankind to become monks; and, if some were to remain in the world and to marry, the Church should for them develop a code of behavior.

## In Defense of Marriage

Yet while all these depreciatory attitudes toward marriage were prevalent, the detractors were also the defenders. They were in the middle between those who condemned marriage and those who would renounce it only for some special service.

Tertullian replying to Marcion declared, "We vindicate marriage against those who disparage the Creator. We do not give up marriage because of the possibility of lust any more than we give up clothes because of the possibility of luxury."[19] And Tertullian pointed out that Paul's preference for celibacy was predicated only upon the shortness of the time and not upon the evil of marriage.[20] Clement of Alexandria likewise refuted the Marcionite attitude to things created and upheld marriage partly on the basis of the command in Genesis to be fruitful and multiply (1:28) and partly on more secular and philosophical grounds. The succession of children is necessary, he said, just as corks hold up fish lines, and also for the maintenance of one's country as well as for the perfection of oneself and of the world. "Not to rear up children is to dissolve states and society, and is an unmanly evasion of responsibility."[21]

Tertullian explained the polygamy in the patriarchs as temporarily necessary to fill up the world but as contrary to God's preferred intent, since he employed only one rib in making a wife for

Adam.[22] One of the finest passages known in Christian literature on companionability in marriage comes from the pen of Tertullian: "Where the flesh is one, one also is the spirit. Together husband and wife pray, together perform their fasts, mutually teaching, exhorting, sustaining. Equally they are found in the church of God, equally at the banquet of God, equally in persecutions and in refreshments. Neither conceals from the other, shuns the other, or is burdensome to the other. Between the two echo psalms and hymns while they mutually challenge each other which shall better sing to their Lord."[23]

Likewise Chrysostom, though unmarried, undertook to counsel married couples. His injunction was that the wife should never say to her husband: " 'Unmanly coward and lazy sluggard, look at that man. He is of low birth, but he runs risks, undertakes voyages, and has made a fortune. His wife wears jewels and goes out with a pair of milk-white mules. She is attended by a troop of slaves, but you have cowered down and live to no purpose.' But if a wife does so speak, her husband

shall say to her: 'My dear, when I could have taken many to wife, both with better fortunes and of noble family, I did not so choose but was enamoured of you.' Then immediately from these beginnings the husband shall open the way to a discourse on true wisdom with some circumlocutions on the vanity of riches."[24]

## Church Discipline for Sexual Offenses

The treatment of sexual offenses in the early church was marked by progressive relaxation. Not that the offense was ever condoned, but that the offender was the more readily pardoned that he might be strengthened by the sacraments and fellowship of the church and should not repeat his offense. At the outset, fornication ranked with apostasy and bloodshed as one of the three unforgivable sins. It did not, however, for that reason cease to be a problem for the Christian community. Origen lamented the presence of fornicators among the catechumens, one of whom defended himself saying, "I was young, I was unmarried. Prior to marriage I fornicated."[25] Such a person obviously

could not be admitted to communion, but what if he were penitent? Throughout the second century the church was adamant that any of the three major transgressions excluded definitively from the fellowship of the church. About A.D. 220, however, the bars went down in the case of sexual offenders, provided of course they were repentent. Callistus, Bishop of Rome, undertook to forgive alike fornicators and adulterers. A blast of stormy remonstrance issued from Tertullian and Hippolytus, who for a time at Rome headed a protesting schism.[26] Yet the practice of Callistus became entrenched and whereas in A.D. 220 Tertullian could say, "Shall we forgive adulterers when we do not forgive apostates?", in 250 Cyprian could ask, "Shall we refuse to forgive apostates since we do forgive adulterers?" This relaxation on the part of the church is in marked contrast with the behavior of the state, for this is the very period in which adultery was visited with the severest penalty.

The Roman government was actually harsher than the Christian church. The legislation went back to the time of the Emperor Augustus who to

stem the prevalent sexual indulgence without progeny, placed a tax upon bachelors, offered rewards for large families, and penalized adultery with banishment. His own daughter Julia and the poet Ovid were expelled under this enactment. The common opinion has been that this legislation continued in force until rendered more severe by Constantine who stiffened the penalty to death. Against this view Doelger offers cogent reasons for believing that Constantine was actually mitigating the mode of penalty, which since the time of Septimius Severus early in the third century had been death by burning. Constantine allowed instead decapitation. His son Constans reverted to the earlier severity which continued to the time of Justinian. At the very moment when the civil law was thus becoming more severe, the church grew more lenient toward the sexual offender.[27]

## Why Birth Control Was Protested

The question of birth control came up in a context which could only invite condemnation. In the early third century during the pontificate of Cal-

listus, already mentioned, a peculiar dilemma confronted the church in that the women of senatorial rank in the congregations outnumbered the men of equal status. The church desired to keep marriage within the fold, but the women were unwilling to take the men and thereby sink to their servile status. The church consequently permitted unions which in the eyes of the law rated only as concubinage. This does not mean that they were polygamous for neither the word "poly" nor "gamous" applied, since these unions were neither plural nor were they marriages in the strictly legal sense. They were unions of two partners in which the party inferior in rank did not enjoy a full marital status. The church saw the essence of marriage in a lifelong union with the intent of progeny and not in legal recognition.

An unforeseen consequence of this permission was that the women of the aristocracy, though ready to marry the freedmen or slaves, were yet loath to have children by them because the offspring would take the status of the father, and to avoid progeny the women employed contraceptive

drugs. Against this practice Hippolytus cried out in shocked repugnance. Highly significant is it that the first protest of the church against contraception was directed against those who were seeking not to space children but to have none at all.

Incidentally it may be remarked that the ancients were acquainted with contraceptive techniques. As early as 100 B.C. an inscription reveals a distinction between an abortive drug called *Phthoreion* and a contraceptive called *Atokeion*. In addition the Greeks and notably Soranus, writing in the second century A.D., showed an acquaintance with methods apart from drugs, all of them to be applied by the female, namely medicated pessaries, vaginal plugs, and astringent solutions. No Christian group to my knowledge prior to the late nineteenth century considered the propriety of the use of any of these methods.

Abortion of course in any form and at any time was discountenanced by the church,[28] but there was difference of opinion as to the enormity of the crime. And here it was that Christian thinking suffered influence from classical theories. The

Stoics held that the growth of the embryo is a physical process and that the soul is not conjoined with the flesh until birth. Consequently abortion is not murder. This was the view taken by the Roman law. The Platonic tradition was that the soul, although not derived directly from the parents, yet is waiting in the offing to be united with the foetus at conception. If this be the case, then abortion at whatever time is the taking of a human life. A middle ground rested on the view of Aristotle according to whom the soul entered in the case of males at the fortieth day and for females at the ninetieth. A less precise statement of this position found its way with approval into Christian circles through the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek, where a distinction was introduced not present in the original (Exodus 21, 22, 23). The Greek version prescribed a fine for violence causing a miscarriage in case the embryo were as yet unformed, but if the foetus already displayed a human resemblance, then a life should be given for a life. Precisely when the resemblance could be fixed was not defined. At any rate for the

later stages of pregnancy, the Church was bound to look upon abortion as murder and thus to take a severer stand than that of the Roman law.[29]

## The More Mature Views of St. Augustine

Augustine brought to formulation the mature view of the early church with regard to sexual relations and marriage. His own view was conditioned by antithesis to two groups at opposite poles. There were first the Manichees who looked upon the flesh as evil and life in the flesh as demeaning. Sex was of course degrading, yet the sexual act was more readily to be condoned than the procreation of children which entails the imprisonment of more souls within the body. Obviously those who indulge in sex without offspring had to practice contraception. The other extreme was represented by the Pelagians who declared that procreation was ordained by God in order to fill up the vacancies occasioned by death. Birth transmitted no taint from Adam and the sexual act was in no sense sinful. To be sure, inordinate desire is

reprehensible, but natural appetite which impels to marriage and procreation is good.

Augustine took a middle ground. Procreation is not evil. It has been ordained by God, not however for the purpose of filling up the vacancies occasioned by death. God does not care whether the earth is replenished—but only for the purpose of filling up the number of the elect. To that end procreation is needful and should not be avoided within marriage. Augustine himself had lived a monogamous relationship with a concubine for sixteen years. Because of a disparity in social status he could not make her his wife. What disturbed him about this union, however, was not that it did not rate legally as marriage but that during so long a period they had had only one child. Contraception was sharply condemned by him, and here we have another instance in which the polemic of churchmen was directed against those who practiced birth control in order to have no children rather than to achieve a sound spacing.

Since procreation is definitely approved, the sexual act as such cannot be wrong. Nevertheless

it is never without wrongful accompaniments. There is never an exercise of sex without passion, and passion is wrong. If we could have children in any other way we would refrain entirely from sex. Since we cannot, we indulge regretfully. Augustine almost voices the wish that the Creator had contrived some other device. If we are to fulfill His will we are inevitably placed in the position of being constrained to sin. This sin, however, is covered by the sacrament of marriage to the degree that that which, outside of marriage, would be a mortal offense, within marriage, is only venial. The same point applies to relationships within the marriage bond for satisfaction rather than for progeny. The practice is condemned, yet no married couple will profess to have confined itself to the needs of procreation. The offense again is covered by the sacrament.

Augustine recognized in marriage legitimate purposes in addition to procreation. There can indeed be a valid marriage without children; if both parties by mutual consent should dedicate themselves to chastity they would still be validly mar-

ried. The good of marriage then consists in companionship, the lifelong fidelity of partners, and the sacrament.

Augustine thus develops the sacramental view of marriage as an enduring partnership with the primary purpose of offspring. Procreation is the end and is not to be impeded in any other way than through continence. Virginity is exalted above marriage which can scarcely be given the first place inasmuch as sin in marriage is inescapable even though mitigated by the sacrament. The view of marriage as companionability finds recognition, but of the romantic picture of love and marriage there is never a trace.[30]

CHAPTER THREE

# CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE RELATIONS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The Western world of the Middle Ages served in many respects to demean marriage because of a number of new factors in the society. The first was the irruption of northern peoples, the Germans and the Celts. Their sexual behavior and marriage customs prior to the invasion cannot be reconstructed in all respects with assurance. Monogamy prevailed, but kings and chieftains practiced polygamy. The assumption has been common that the Germans discountenanced any sexual relations beyond the marital bond. This picture goes back in part to the Roman historian Tacitus, but even more to the monk Salvianus of the fifth century who accounted for the collapse of the empire on the ground that the barbarians were more chaste than the Romans. Said he: "Among chaste barbarians we are ourselves unchaste. I shall say even

more; the barbarians themselves are offended by our vices. Among the Goths no one is permitted to indulge in fornication; only the Romans in their land, by national and titular prerogative, are allowed this vice. What hope, I ask, have we then in the sight of God? We love vice, while the Goths execrate it; we flee from purity, while they love it; fornication with them is a perilous vice, but with us a mark of honor. Do we think that we can stand before God, do we think that we can attain salvation, when every crime of impurity, every disgraceful vice, is committed by the Romans and censured by the barbarians?"[31]

## Early Betrothals

Modern historians have discovered that this picture, if it be true for the Goths, at any rate is not for the Celts, with regard to whom we are better informed. Abundant evidence demonstrates that among them premarital chastity was not the rule and sexual hospitality was long practiced. And when the Germans became established in the empire and documents became sufficiently extensive

with regard to their mores, we discover that in matters of sex they were no more restrained than were the older inhabitants. The church all along had a severe struggle to impose her standards. The point at which the customs of the Germans served to demean the marriage relationship was that the emphasis lay not as with the Romans on consent but rather upon the rights of the husband over the property and the person of his wife. She was transferred to him along with the dowry and constituted herself a portion of his property. We are not of course to assume that marriages were normally forced. In such a system the young people ordinarily do what is expected of them, and those who defied their families served rather to provide the theme for a saga than to establish a pattern for society.[32]

The stress on property rather than on affection was further enhanced by the agricultural character of the emergent society. After the invasions cities declined, not so much because the barbarians were incapable of accommodating themselves to urban life as because the ensuing Mohammedan invasions

cut off the Mediterranean as a channel of commerce. In consequence land became the basis of all life and of all institutions in a feudal system. In such a scheme marriage served not simply for propagation but even more for the unification of families and estates. Betrothals, therefore, were contracted at too early an age for consent to be a factor. A few examples may be adduced. The daughter of Count Roger of Sicily was still a child when her hand was given to King Conrad in 1095. Adelheid was eight when in 1110 she was engaged to Henry V. Eleven years was the age of Gertrud, daughter of King Lothair, when betrothed to King Henry of Bavaria in 1127. King Louis of France betrothed his daughter when yet in the cradle to the thirteen-year-old son of King Henry of England in 1158. The son of the Count of Brabant was only just born when he was affianced in 1207 to the daughter of Philip of Swabia. To name but one more example, St. Elizabeth was but four when engaged to the twelve-year-old Ludwig of Thuringia. When the children became of age the

church insisted that they should not be forced to marry.[33]

## Family Marriages

Nevertheless, in a society where acquiescence was assumed, filial rebellion was infrequent. Marriages also were consummated at an early age in Germany in the late Middle Ages. The average age for girls was from thirteen to fifteen years, and for boys from fifteen to nineteen. Among the Wittelbachs and Hohenzollerns in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries many instances are recorded of marriages at the age of twelve and thirteen years.[34] In a word, the Christian Middle Ages had the system of family marriages still prevalent in India and China. This is not to say that marriage was a yoke of bondage or a vale of tears. Families no doubt had some eye to the suitability of partners who after marriage might become attached to each other, but the atmosphere was not romantic.

The less so because the rulers of the church took no account of the feelings of the partners. If one member wearied of a political match and sought

satisfaction beyond the marriage bond the church employed every device to enforce fidelity. When, for example, Lothair I deserted his wife in favor of his concubine, the church insisted that he return. He thereupon made life so miserable for his wife that she was ready to resort to extreme expedients to be rid of him. But the church ruled that she must endure martyrdom rather than suffer him to live with his concubine.[35]

## Impediments to Marriage

In other instances unions were dissolved with similar unconcern for feelings. The church had an elaborate set of impediments to marriage which were enforced with no regard to personal attachments or aversions. Consanguinity, affinity, and spiritual relationship constituted bars to marriage. Consanguinity was carried by some to the seventh degree in deference to the seven days of the week of creation. Some, however, were content with the sixth degree, since God rested from creation on the seventh day. Innocent III in the thirteenth century modified the practice and reduced the impediment

to the fourth degree. Affinity was a relationship contracted through marriage such as that of a brother-in-law, sister-in-law, and so on. Prohibition of marriage with a deceased wife's sister or a deceased husband's brother falls in this category. Spiritual relationships were incurred through standing sponsor in baptism. The godfather could not marry his goddaughter, and many held that his son could not marry her either. When unions were contracted in violation of these regulations the church ruthlessly forced the couples apart.[36]

Robert the Pious, for example, had been living happily for some years with his wife Bertha when it was discovered that he was related to her physically as fourth cousin and spiritually as godfather to her child by a previous marriage. Protracted excommunication at length constrained them to separate.[37]

Some of these impediments, however, were capable of dispensations, particularly those that involved no biological peril. The church for a consideration was ready to concede a special permission. In this way a practical equivalent was

discovered for divorce in that if any defect were subsequently found in the dispensation, an annulment could be secured. This was not a divorce but a declaration that the marriage had never existed in the first place. Consequently no barrier stood in the way of a new union. Any children born to the couple in the time of their ignorance were legitimatized. Such subterfuges were not unwelcome to the church, which by reason of them came to control all the marriages of royal and noble houses. Nor were they unpalatable to the populace who preferred ambiguity and loopholes to inflexible rigor. In this entire picture romance of course played no part.

## The Exaltation of Virginity

The more so was this the case because the church increasingly exalted virginity. Widely disseminated and highly popular were tales like that of St. Alexius who at the very altar forsook his bride to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Returning, he lived unrecognized as a beggar beneath his father's doorsteps. Incognito he sought out his

affianced and related to her the exploits of her intended bridegroom in the hope that she might emulate his example. On his death she only was able to wrest from his clenched fingers the parchment which contained the record of his life and the secret of his identity. This was the story which converted Peter Waldo to a life of renunciation.[38]

The great campaign for clerical celibacy entailed an exaltation of virginity as an ideal for those dedicated to religion, and though of course the same demand was not laid upon the laity they must perforce think of themselves as living on a lower plane. Celibacy did not become the rule until the eleventh century but, long before, bishops like Chrysostom who conformed to the monastic code were more highly esteemed. If a priest were married sexual relations were deemed disqualifying for service at the altar, and Gregory I decreed that those who celebrated the sacraments should observe continence. The story is told of a priest of his time who kept his wife at a distance. When he was on his deathbed she came to say goodbye, but he forbade her with the words, "Depart, woman, take

away the straw, for there is yet fire here." Papal and episcopal exhortations were, however, steadily disregarded. In the year 966 Rathesius reported that all the clergy in his district were married and if the married were removed only boys would be left in the churches. Bishop Segenfrid of Le Mans was openly married and called his wife *Episcopissa.* In the tenth century the papacy itself fell into such disorder that this period is referred to as the pornographic chapter. The great Gregorian reform sought to cleanse the Augean stables by demanding, not fidelity to marital vows, but the abolition of all marriage for the clergy. The laity were called upon to refuse to accept the sacraments at the hands of the married priests. The danger was implicit that the sacrament would be considered invalidated by the vice of the priest. The church had to be careful to guard against this error while continuing the campaign against the married clergy, even to the point of expulsions by violence. The reform at length triumphed in canon law though it was very far from prevailing in practice. In many areas clerical marriage was simply suc-

ceeded by clerical concubinage, and in the age of the Renaissance popes made no secret of concubines and bastards.[39]

The point here, however, is that the campaign for celibacy tended to disparage marriage. Virginity was constantly exalted as an ideal. And at the same time those committed to celibacy strengthened their own resolve by berating the female sex. An antifeminist literature became rife. In the early fifteenth century Christine of Pisa rallied to the defense of her sex but only thereby precipitated the *Querelle des Femmes,* in a succession of tracts vilifying more than berating matrimony. Take for example *Les Quinze Joies de Mariage* ("The Fifteen Joys of Marriage"). The first is that the wife is desolate because she is not dressed according to her lineage. Other women of her circle are robed in fur and scarlet. "But, my dear," replies her husband, "we have scarcely any furniture. We have had to buy beds and mattresses. We have precious little money right now, and you know we have to buy two oxen, and the roof of our barn has fallen in." The wife resumes her plea with the reflection

that she had some twenty suitors, and now the clothes which her friends cast off to their chambermaids are better than those which she wears on the Sabbath. In the end the poor husband makes the purchase on credit, but when the time for payment comes he is unable to meet the debt and ends up under excommunication.[40]

A modern historian after surveying the literature of this genre concludes that on the eve of the Reformation marriage appeared to be an institution in disrepute and the satires were infinitely more numerous than the panegyrics. The church of course never went so far as to condemn marriage, and the doctors of the church all said that marriage is good and is no impediment to salvation nor even to sainthood. At the same time the disparagement was constant.[41]

During the early church and Middle Ages the prevailing view of sex was disparaging. Marriage was sacramental, lifelong, primarily for progeny, unromantic, and rating below virginity.

In the meantime, however, a revulsion had taken place. In the twelfth century in southern France

three new developments became simultaneously apparent: the rise of the Cathari with their utter repudiation of marriage in favor of asceticism; the courts of love with their cult of adultery; and the erotic mysticism of St. Bernard and the enormous vogue of the Virgin Mary. The interrelations of these three are difficult to assess.

The Cathari were a revival of the ancient Manichees. Even a direct connection is not impossible because the views of the Manichees persisted among a group called the Paulicians in Asia Minor, some of whom were deported to Bulgaria where they were called the Bogomili. Disillusioned crusaders returning from the Orient by way of Bulgaria picked up these ideas and imported them into southern France where the heretics were called Bougres, a corruption of Bulgar. The English derivative is Bugger, and in England it is still a very obnoxious term. The Cathari regarded life in the flesh as an imprisonment and propagation as sinful. Sex was to be completely eschewed. They would not even eat anything connected with processes of sex: no eggs, cheese, butter, or milk.

Luckily they did not know that fish and vegetables have sex.

## The Cult of Romantic or Courtly Love

Coincidentally and in the very same region arose the cult of romantic love. The historical specialists are agreed that the ideal of courtly love was something altogether new. This, of course, is not to say that people had never before fallen in love. What of the passion of Paris for Helen, or the languishing of Dido, not to mention Ovid's *Art of Love?* But love in these instances was considered an enslaving passion, if not an occasion for levity.[42] Courtly love on the contrary was portrayed as ennobling, because the beloved is superior to the lover and conveys to him something of her own worth. Here for the first time we have not only a cult of love but also the idealization of woman. The love which ennobles must be freely bestowed and the quality of unconstraint is best exhibited if the beloved is superior to the lover. On his part there is required a humility which never takes success for granted, a constant yearning and striv-

ing after love. Courtly love called for continual courtship and courtesy.

The three conditions of this love are exhibited in troubadour song. The first is that love ennobles. "Love is not a sin," sang one of the troubadours, "Rather it is a power that makes the evil good and by it the good become better." Second, the beloved must be superior to the lover. "The lady of whom you hear me sing is fairer than I can say; fresh complectioned, beautiful to look upon, without blemish. Yes, and she is not rouged, nor can anyone say evil of her, so pure and noble is she." "She is lovely; gay and noble is she." The lover is her inferior and her vassal. "Lady, I am and shall be yours, ready for your service. I am your sworn and pledged vassal." In the third place, love must be a quest ever uncertain. "So fearful am I in regard to her, the fair one, that I deliver myself to her, imploring her mercy." Jealousy is "the mother and nurse of love," in the sense of solicitude, anxiety, and vehemence of desire.

This love was held to be impossible in marriage, because in marriage love is taken for granted, not

freely given. In marriage woman is not the superior but the equal if not indeed the inferior of man. In marriage there is no exhilarating quest, no furtive fulfillment. The conditions of courtly love are best realized if the lover address himself to a married woman on whom he has less than a claim and whom he cannot enjoy without stealth and adventure. Hence courtly love became the cult of adultery.[43]

In real life we discover the conflict of virginity, marriage, and courtly love in the case of Abelard and Eloise. He was a distinguished teacher who won the love of a young and brilliant girl. They had a child out of wedlock. Abelard, who had violated the hospitality of her uncle, offered to make amends by marriage. Eloise was the one to object. Her scale of values reveals the conflicting currents of the age. In the first rank she placed virginity. Abelard had already taken lower orders in the church looking toward ordination and celibacy. He had fallen from this high ideal, but should return rather than that they should continue in sin. But if not, she would rather be his mistress

than his wife. The reason was partly economic. As a teacher he could not support a wife and family and continue his career, because universities in those days were not endowed to support married professors. But the most serious consideration was that marriage was a yoke of bondage for the wife and a device for uniting properties. "I want not yours but you. I invoke God as a witness that if Augustus should offer to make me his empress I would rather be your mistress." They did marry, presumably to satisfy Abelard's debt of honor, but the scale of values remained: virginity first, courtly love second, and marriage third.[44]

Much discussion has recently taken place as to the origin and the nature of courtly love. The question of origin is not irrelevant to the problem of the nature. Some stress the spiritual and some the physical aspects of the cult. In the former instance the source is found in the Neoplatonic aspiration for union with the divine. The woman simply takes the place of the ineffable *nous*.[45] Others point as the source to Arabian mysticism. Some think that the mystical eroticism of St. Bernard and the

cult of the Virgin may have affected the view of the ways of a man with a maid.[46] Those who look rather to the physical aspects would find the source in the infiltration of such works as the Arabian Nights from Spain.[47] The most startling theory is that of De Rougement who contends that the cult of romantic love is one with the Catharian repudiation of life in the flesh.

The typical example of courtly love is found by him in the story of *Tristram and Isolde,* and here it is observed that when passion might have been gratified Tristram placed between them his sword. The essence then of this love is that it should not be gratified. Fulfillment is forever deferred in order to prolong the delights of languishing. The only possible reconciliation is death. Thus the cult of love comes to be equated with the negation of life.[48] To this picture the reply has been made that *Tristram and Isolde* is not a typical troubadour poem but rather an old Celtic legend inadequately adapted to the new theme. All must concede, however, that in romantic love there was much languishing. The explanation offered by some is that

in the nature of the case the pursuit of a married woman had to be furtive and was capable only of occasional fulfillment. De Rougement's view appears to be conclusively refuted by the evidence accumulated in the work of Briffault, who abundantly demonstrated that much of courtly love was extremely crass and emphatically directed toward the gratification of passion. Progressively it was refined. The source in Briffault's judgment was simply that laxity which had persisted from antiquity. The new element lay not so much in the behavior as in the frank repudiation of the churchly view in favor of an idealization of passion elevated to a level of worship in such fashion that refinement became possible.[49] But whatever may have been the origin, the consensus of scholars is that romantic love was genuinely something new.

## Romance and Marriage

The time when romantic love and marriage came to be combined cannot be determined with precision. Certainly the union was not achieved by that great synthesizer of medieval thought,

Thomas Aquinas. In this area he followed entirely in the steps of St. Augustine. Marriage for St. Thomas, to use a modern summary, is "the permanent union of one man and one woman, legitimately formed under contract, with a view to a common life and the procreation of offspring." The essence of marriage consists not in actual copulation as in Germanic law but in consent in accord with Roman law. The primary ends of marriage are the generation and education of children. The secondary ends are mutual aid and a remedy for concupiscence. Marriage does provide a sphere for the exercise of highest friendship, *maxima amicitia*.[50]

This supreme friendship is of course not incompatible with romantic love. A tender affection may merge into a passionate attachment and a religious adoration. Friendship in marriage was always a medieval ideal. The *Brut* complained of marriage "without friendship."[51] Medieval Scottish ballads witness to a devotion on the part of the husband comparable to that of the troubadours. Here is an example:

My heart is heich above
My body is full of bliss
For I am set in luve
As weil as I wold wiss (wish).
I luve my lady pure,
And she luvis me again;
I am her serviture,
She is my soverane
The thing that may her please
My body sall fulfil;
Whatever her disease,
It does my body ill.
My bird, my bonny ane,
My tender babe venust (graceful)
My luve, my life alane,
My liking and my lust (desire).

In other lines he describes himself as "her luver leal, her bound and thrall." Certainly some of the elements are here of the romantic cult and all of this within matrimony. Notestein, who cites these and other examples, remarks that there is here "no Guinevere and Sir Launcelot business."[52]

There are some interpreters who feel that a line is to be drawn between the north and the south of Europe, and that whereas in the French courts of

love romance meant adultery, in Germany and England it was never dissociated from marriage.[53] This generalization is too sweeping, for the Minnesänger also had their morning laments when the night of furtive delight must end. One can say, however, that sometimes and that right early, romantic love in the north found fulfillment in marriage. So for example in the *Parzifal* of Wolfram of Eschenbach (born about 1165). The knight having by doughty deeds won the guerdon of his lady's love, the outcome was not a clandestine liaison. "Invited now to share one bed, he and the queen said they would wed." He displayed toward her the courtesy of restraint and "for two days and of nights the third did not exceed fond embrace." The poet comments, "If I may say it with meetness, he found the waiting sweetness." The fruition was neither adultery nor death, but wedded union.[54]

In the Latin lands romanticism was slower in domestication. Perhaps courtly love had first to be desensualized before becoming capable of combination with marriage in the Christian sense. The cult of the Virgin, the lyrical rhapsodies of St.

Francis toward *La Donna Poverta,* Dante's devotion to the etherealized Beatrice may so have contributed to the refinement of romance as to make possible its attachment to the sacrament of marriage. Not until the fifteenth century, however, do we find it. In France the pioneer was a woman, Christine of Pisa (1364-1429), who rebelled against the denigration of woman in the *Roman de la Rose,* and herself inaugurated the literature in defense of her sex.[55] She, too, it was who in celebrating her own wedded love described the ardor of her husband, his kisses and restraint, his vows of devotion, all after the manner of the troubadours:

Marriage is a lovely thing,
As I with proof can tell,
Like others who God's blessing bring
Upon their marriage-bell.
God save the man in His mercy
Who saves my husband unto me.
Truly he loves me well.

And first upon our wedding night,
As I with proof can tell,
He spared me shame or any slight,

In gentleness to dwell
Till morning came. Sans villainy
A hundred kisses gave he me.
Truly he loves me well.

He said that this was what he dreamed,
(As I with proof can tell)
"An angel raised me up it seemed
From some obscuring hell
To be your servitor, Ma Mie,
To serve you in humility."
Truly he loves me well.

But, ah! when he does say to me,
As I with proof can tell,
That he is mine, all mine to be
Until the grave shall quell
The ardor of our amity—
From such sweet anguish I could die!
Truly he loves me well.[56]

In Italy the pathbreaker was a contemporary of Christine, Francesco Barbaro, whose *De Re Uxoria* dates from 1415. He lauded companionability in marriage in terms well-nigh romantic. "For what," said he, "is sweeter than to have a modest wife, a companion in prosperity and adversity, a helpmate

and friend to whom you may confide your most intimate reflections, to whom you commit your common children, in whose sweet conversation you lay down all cares and anxieties, whom you so love that in her welfare you esteem a very part of your own life to be included?"[57] Francesco Barbaro came still closer to romanticism in his vehement opposition to family-made marriages without regard to the affections of the young people. The Cretans, he thought, were to be commended because they "permitted their daughters to be married to none but to those to whom the virgins themselves had expressed signs of love; for they believe that those would be more beloved by their wives who were beloved even before the nuptial union . . . wood thrown into a fire doth not instantly flame; wherefore they think it necessary that in husbands they should judiciously choose the resemblance of their own minds; for they believe they can neither be rightly known nor ardently loved on a sudden."[58]

In Germany the *Ehebüchlein* of Albrecht von Eyb of 1472 is not infrequently referred to as dis-

tinctive for its union of love and marriage. A classic passage is the following: "Marriage is joyous, delightful, and sweet. What could be more joyous and sweet than the name of father and mother and child, and to receive from them many sweet kisses? And when the married partners have such love for each other and share in common good and ill, then does the good become the more joyous and the ill is less grievous to bear."[59] Strictly speaking, this is rather an example of companionability in marriage than of romantic attachment. It is suffused with tenderness and centers on all the delights of home even more than upon the attachment of the wedded pair. Not husband and wife but father and mother are the terms preferred. Over against the coarse berating of marriage so prevalent in the period this treatise bespeaks a lofty albeit not strictly a romantic view. Romantic it could hardly be because von Eyb still exalted virginity above marriage.

In England the poet who weaves the strands is Edmund Spenser (1522-1599). He could the more readily associate romance and marriage because for

him the key to all reality is love. The heart of God is love, the bond of the universe is love, the transmission of life is love. There are grades of love in an ascending scale and the lower forms are not to be despised. They can indeed be transmuted into the higher, and physical love like physical beauty can be suffused with the spiritual. Here plainly the Neoplatonism of the Renaissance has contributed to the fusion of the forms of love.[60] They are brought together not only in the *Faerie Queene* but even more pointedly in the *Epithalamion* in which Spenser celebrated his own wedding. He commenced with the recital of his beloved's charms and passed then to praise of her graces of the spirit:

Tell me, ye merchants daughters, did ye see
So fayre a creature in your towne before;
So sweet, so lovely, and so mild as she,
Adorned with beauty's grace and vertues store?
Her goodly eyes lyke saphyres shining bright,
Her forehead ivory white,
Her cheeks lyke apples which the sun hath rudded,
Her lips like cherries charming men to byte,
Her brest like to a bowl of creame uncrudded,
Her paps like lyllies budded,

Her snowie neck lyke to a marble towre;
And all her body like a pallace fayre,
Ascending up, with many a stately stayre,
To honors seat and chastities sweet bowre.
Why stand ye still, ye virgins in amaze,
Upon her to gaze,
Whiles ye forget your former lay to sing,
To which the woods did answer, and your echo ring?
But if ye saw that which no eyes can see,
The inward beauty of her lively spright,
Garnisht with heavenly guifts of high degree,
Much more then would ye wonder at that sight,
And stand astonisht lyke to those which red
Medusaes mazeful hed.
There dwells sweet love, and constant chastity,
Unspotted fayth, and comely womanhood,
Regard of honour, and mild modesty;
There vertue raynes as queene in royal throne,
And giveth lawes alone.
The which the base affections doe obay,
And yeeld theyr services unto her will;
Ne thought of things uncomely ever may
Thereto approch to tempt her mind to ill.
Had ye once seene these her celestial treasures,
And unrevealed pleasures,
Then would ye wonder, and her prayses sing,
That all the woods should answer, and your echo ring.

The conclusion is a prayer that the heavens may "pour out your blessing on us plenteously, a happy influence upon us rain, that we may raise a large posterity."[61] In the end then he comes to that which the church of the Middle Ages had deemed the prime purpose of marriage.

# THE REFORMATION ON SEX AND MARRIAGE

Spenser was the better able to effect such a blending of themes as the lines quoted in the preceding chapter because he stood within the orbit of the Reformation. This is not to say, however, that the first reformers had the least inkling of fostering the romanticizing of matrimony. Their main contribution lay rather in removing the stigma attached to wedlock as inferior to virginity. The Catholic Church looks upon certain acts as religiously defiling. In the case of the priest there are two, the shedding of blood and the sexual act. They are not absolutely forbidden. The priest if conscripted may serve in the ranks, and the priests of the Uniat churches are married. But bloodshed and intercourse call for purification before officiating at the altar. Likewise, childbirth is defiling, and also requires purification before receiving the rites of the church. This entire practice Luther swept away.

His point was not that sex entails no sin but only that it involves no more sin than any other act. In everything he does man falls short of the glory of God, and not especially at this point. Neither did Luther deny that procreation transmits original sin and that in consequence Christ had to be born of a virgin in order to be perfect. Yet again there is no particular part of the process of procreation which can be designated as especially sinful.

## Married Love Exalted by Luther

The nature of the sin is well brought out in a passage in which married love is placed above all other. Luther said:

> There are three kinds of love, false, natural, and married. False love is that which seeks its own, just as one loves gold, goods, honor, or women outside of matrimony contrary to God's command. Natural love is between father and children, brother and sister, et cetera. But above them all is married love, that is, a bride's love. It burns as fire, and seeks nothing more than the mate. It says, "I wish not yours, I wish neither gold nor silver, neither this nor that. I want only you. I want everything or nothing." All other loves seek

something else than that which is love, but this love alone desires the beloved completely. If Adam had not fallen, the love of the bridegroom and the bride would be the loveliest thing. But now love is not pure, because although the married partner seeks the other, yet the desire of self enters in and perverts this love.[62]

Here one sees that sin lies not in sex as such but in that selfishness which perverts sex. Likewise one perceives how Luther could exalt matrimony above virginity which he stigmatized as an evasion of social responsibility.

Yet his defense of marriage in his opening attack on clerical and monastic celibacy was crass. The reason was that the practices which he opposed were crass. Catholic historians are today agreed that the abuses in Luther's time were rife. Clerical concubinage was in many quarters an accepted institution, and homosexuality was lightly condoned. Throughout the Middle Ages the church had been plagued by this vice and in the very days of the institution of the Gregorian Reform opponents and defenders alike had weighed the chances that the imposition of celibacy would cure the

malady.[63] It had failed. Witness the denunciations of preachers like Bernardino of Sienna and Bernardino Ochino. Luther charged that in his day cardinals were esteemed as saints who confined themselves to women.[64]

Luther in combating this corruption at first stressed the Pauline permission to marry as a *remedium peccati.* The sexual impulse is so strong, said he, that few are able to be chaste. They may be continent, but to be chaste is to be free from the obsession of sex, and only they are capable of this to whom the strength is given. That is why a married man may be more chaste than a monk, and that is why to force continence upon those who have not the gift of chastity is to condemn them to hell and purgatory. The pope can no more forbid male and female to unite than he can prohibit eating and drinking. Luther's advice, if one party were unwilling or impotent, was sometimes that the other should bear the cross and sometimes that another partner might be sought. Even bigamy might be allowed as *remedium peccati,* that is, as an alternative to promiscuity.

So exclusively did Luther at first stress the necessity of marriage as a cure for immorality that procreation as the chief end of marriage was slighted. He said flatly that it is not the end which the married couple have in view in their relations. "Propagation is not in our will and power, for no parents are able to foresee whether they are fecund and whether they will bring forth a son or a daughter. My father and mother did not consider that they wanted to bring a Dr. Martin Luther into the world. Creation is of God alone and we are not able to perceive it."[65] Yet at other times he was emphatic enough that marriage is designed to fulfill the command to be fruitful and multiply.

## The Home, a School for Character

After his own marriage Luther's tone shifted to a stress upon the home as a school for character. It is the area where the Christian virtues find their readiest exemplification, and, whereas in Catholicism monasticism is the sphere for the cultivation of the counsels of perfection, in Protestantism the home is as it were a functional substitute. The con-

cept of the counsels of perfection was of course not retained, yet there was a feeling that the punitive aspects of the state involved a peculiar difficulty for the Christian. And whereas this is not altogether absent from the family, inasmuch as the father is in a sense magistrate, yet here forgiveness and reconciliation are the more readily achieved.

When Luther describes love in the home it is not, however, primarily romantic love. Isaac's dalliance with Rebecca when he was eighty and she seventy was recorded by the Holy Spirit, who does not disdain such trifles, in order to refute the fanatics and show that conjugal harmony is beautiful and "how better to be expressed than by embracing?"[66] Yet Jacob's other seven years for the pretty face of Rachel were reproved since he already had Leah. The main thing in marriage is that a wife should be a woman, not that she should be attractive. For that reason Luther endorsed the old system of family made matches. The one thing that parents must not do is to prevent their children from marrying. The father who constrains his daughter to remain at home to do the maid's work should be deprived

of his rights as a father. The parents have no more authority than the pope to interpose such a veto.

Neither should parents be harsh and force children to marry with aversion. On the other hand, children should not be addicted to infatuation nor hold out obstinately for personal predilection in violation of parental choices. The ideal bride was Rebecca, who at the behest of her family, forsook her father's house to marry Isaac as yet unseen. Love indeed there is in marriage, but it is only a heightening of that Christian love which is enjoined toward all. We are told to love our neighbors. The wife is the nearest neighbor. She should therefore be the most beloved. Companionability in marriage is of course included. Abraham, after receiving the command to sacrifice Isaac, experienced one of his severest trials in that he could not talk it over with Sarah.

Sometimes Luther looked upon the home as an easy yoke in comparison with the monastery, but on other occasions he regarded monastic solitude as a relief and marriage as preferable from a Christian point of view only because offering a greater

opportunity for the exercise of patience. He marveled at the patriarchs who had been able to stick it out for six or seven hundred years. How often Eve must have said to Adam, "You ate the apple," and Adam retorted, "You gave it to me." How grievous was the old age of Abraham caught in the cross-fire of two women in a paroxysm of jealousy, and how pitiable the declining years of blind Isaac with nothing to listen to but the wrangling of Rebecca with the wives of Esau.[67]

Yet again Luther spoke feelingly of the consolations of marriage and home. "Ah, dear God, marriage is not a thing of nature but a gift of God, the sweetest, the dearest, and the purest life above all celibacy and all singleness, when it turns out well, though the very devil if it does not. For although women have the art, with tears, lies, and snares to beguile a man, they can also be superb and say the very best. If then these three remain in marriage—fidelity and faith, children and progeny, and the sacrament—it is to be considered to be a wholly divine and blessed estate. Oh, how I longed for my loved ones when I lay nigh to death at Schmalkald.

I thought I would never see my wife and little ones again. How grieved I was at the separation. I believe that with the dying the greatest love is the natural craving and love such as that of a man for a wife and the parents for the child. And now that I am well again by God's grace and have once more my wife and bairns, I cherish them the more. Nobody is so spiritual as not to feel these natural attachments and love. A great thing is this bond and communion between man and wife.[68]

## Marriage as a Civil Institution

One observes that in the passage above Luther employs the Augustinian formula that the good of marriage consists in progeny, fidelity, and the sacrament. Yet in the strict sense of the term he denied the sacramental character of marriage, and at this point begins a great divergence between Protestant and Catholic views, in that the Protestant opens the door toward an emphasis upon the civil aspects of marriage whereas Catholicism enhances the ecclesiastical. Luther's point was that a sacrament properly speaking must have been specifically

instituted by Christ and must be distinctively Christian. Marriage qualifies in neither respect. He noted that the classic biblical passage, Ephesians 5:32, translated in the Vulgate by the word *sacramentum* means in the Greek merely a mystery.

There was, however, a more fundamental reason for Luther's objection, namely that marriage is valid among non-Christians, such as the Jews and the Turks, quite as much as for the Christians. Therefore it belongs to the order of nature and not to the sacramental system of the church. For that reason there is no absolute need even of a religious ceremony to make it valid.[69] Luther at this point was merely endorsing the current position of the Catholic Church, which not until the Council of Trent ended the former laxity with the decree that marriage is one of the seven sacraments and must be celebrated in the presence of a priest. Luther, regarding marriage as of the order of nature, was ready to leave the regulation of all of its outward forms to the civil magistrate. Canon law should be displaced by civil law. Only with reluctance would he pass judgment on such points as these: that

clandestine engagements should not be binding. The Catholic Council of Trent agreed with him here. Annulments should never be allowed, Trent to the contrary. Divorce with permission to remarry should be granted to the innocent party in case of *Ehebruch*. This is the German word for adultery. Its literal meaning of a breach of marriage enabled Luther to extend the concept to include willful desertion exceeding six months. This, said he, is more a breach of marriage than is physical infidelity.[70] Here again Trent ruled to the contrary.

Protestants could not well avoid legislation on the subject. The tendency was to set up special matrimonial courts under civil auspices. So at Zurich,[71] so also at Strassburg, where the court consisted of three members of the government and three councilors, all laymen.[72] The Protestants by no means rejected religious services and because they tended to drop the binding character of betrothal the wedding ceremony in church came to constitute the actual marriage. In France a series of church sy-

nods ruled on various matrimonial questions. Some forbade religiously mixed marriages.[73]

Catholics had no need to expand canon law save to make this or that regulation more precise. Their efforts were directed rather toward the elaboration of a literature already of venerable antiquity, designed as an aid to priests in the cure of souls. Sexual irregularities were minutely described, so much so that in connection with the penitential of Burckhard of Worms (1008-12) Professor McNeill observes that the bishop was no less informed than Dr. Kinsey on the sexual behavior of the human male or for that matter of the female. The observation is likewise made that the manuals were suspect as inciting to sin by instilling ideas in the minds of the innocent which would never have arisen spontaneously.[74] Such guides to confessors continue to be produced in our own day and are still open to the same reproach.[75]

In the age of the Counter-Reformation the classical treatise on the whole subject was the ponderous tome of the Jesuit Sanchez (died 1610) entitled *De Matrimonio*. Suffice it here to note in this exten-

sive treatise the influence of ancient ideas with regard to the time of the animation of the fetus. Sanchez is not precise but recognizes that there is a time at which animation occurs and if, prior to this, the life of the mother is in danger abortion may be practiced because if she die the child will never acquire a soul. Thus one sees stretching over the centuries the influence of Aristotle.

## The Prudery of the Counter-Reformation

At one point the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation were agreed. Both so revolted against license as to land in prudery. Luther at the very end of his life was in such a panic over the low necks worn by the girls of Wittenberg that on a journey he wrote declaring his intention never to return.[76] The Council of Trent at its twenty-fifth session decreed, "Figures shall not be painted exciting to lust. . . . And no image shall be placed in a church without the approval of the bishop." In the spirit of these injunctions Paul IV commissioned the painter Daniel de Volterra to clothe some of the nudes in Michelangelo's Last Judg-

ment in the Sistine Chapel. The mood of the populace may be judged from the nickname which they bestowed upon the artist of *Culottier,* that is, "Panties." When Michelangelo's own opinion was invited he replied that attaching drapery was no difficult matter, but he would suggest that the pope might better direct his efforts to the reformation of mankind.[77]

Clement VIII proposed to obliterate the entire fresco of the Last Judgment and was deterred only by remonstrances. Innocent X was shocked by the nudity of the baby Jesus and had him provided with a shirt. And Innocent XI corrected the décolleté of the Virgin Mary, while Pius IX caused all the angels supporting pictures of the popes in the Vatican to be draped.[78] Such prudery, commonly associated with Puritanism, was indeed not absent from the movement, yet was not peculiar to it but rather characterized the Anglicanism of the period. The Geneva Bible of 1582 was popularly called the *Breeches Bible* because in it Genesis 3:7 was so rendered that Adam and Eve after the fall clothed themselves in "breeches." This spirit continued

well into the Victorian era. Havelock Ellis points out that the witchcraft mania was succeeded by the obsession of obscenity. He points out likewise the difficulties of regulation in this area, for when in the 1920's one thousand unmarried women, all college graduates, were asked what they found most "sexually stimulating," the majority answered "man."[79]

CHAPTER FIVE

# PURITANISM AND THE MODERN PERIOD

The third Christian attitude to marriage, which considers companionability as the prime ingredient, came into its own most fully with the more radical varieties of the Reformation such as the Anabaptists, later the Quakers, and in no small measure the Calvinists, particularly the English Puritans. The initial point was the great emphasis placed upon religion. The partners must not suffer their union to center upon their devotion to each other lest they be guilty of idolatry. Cromwell for example wrote to his daughter Bridget, "Dear heart, let not thy love for thy spouse in any way cool thy desire for Christ. That which is most lovable in thy spouse is the image of Christ in him. Look to this and love it most and everything else for this."[80] A Puritan wrote discreetly to his sweetheart:

My Dove, I send you not my heart, for that I trust is sent to Heaven long since, and unless it hath woefully deceived me, it hath not taken up its lodgings in any one's bosom on this side of the Royal City of the Great King, but yet most of it that is allowed to be layed out upon any creature doth safely and singly fall to your share.[81]

Both parties must place religious allegiance above private affections. Not that private affections were in any sense to be denied. They would indeed be enhanced because grounded in a common loyalty to something higher than mere personal attachment. Very great importance was assigned to marriage in the faith, and it is among these more radical groups that the question came to be seriously entertained whether this was not indeed so important that without it no true marriage could exist. The Anabaptist Claus Frey of Strassburg so judged, and when his wife refused to join the brethren he deserted her and their eight children and joined himself to a spiritual sister in the faith. The local Anabaptist congregation disowned him on that account. By some modern writers he has been

deemed a profligate, but be it observed that his conviction cost him his life. He could have saved himself by returning to his wife but refused and was drowned at the command of the Court of Strassburg on the 19th of March, 1534.[82]

Calvin's Geneva went so far as to permit divorce for extreme religious incompatibility which meant specifically that if a Catholic partner would not follow a Protestant into exile the union might be dissolved. This decision was reached by reason of the case of the Marquis of Vico, an Italian nobleman whose wife was deaf to his repeated entreaties that she join him in Geneva. The Protestant divines granted a divorce with permission to remarry.[83]

## Companionability in Marriage

Among some of the radicals of the Reformation, the sexual side of marriage was very greatly subordinated. Thomas Muentzer, a contemporary of Luther, proclaimed as the ideal to have a wife as if having her not. This did not mean celibacy within marriage, since procreation was divinely

ordained. It meant that there should be no more indulgence and no more gratification than this end required.[84] The tendency was to subordinate the sexual and by way of compensation to center upon common endeavors in the rearing of children and in the work of the Lord.[85] With the Anabaptists this was the more prominent because every member of the religious community was esteemed a missionary, whether man or woman. One notes here an equality of the sexes. This became even more marked among the Quakers where women participated equally with men in services. Bearing witness to the light in times of peculiar peril often entailed the physical separation of husband and wife, but neither marriage nor mutual devotion was thereby diminished. Margaret Fox, for example, wrote to her husband:

> Though the Lord had provided an outward habitation for him . . . we were very willing both of us to live apart for some years on God's account and His truth's service, and to deny ourselves of that comfort which we might have had in being together for the sake and service of the Lord and his Truth.[86]

The English Puritans did not discountenance marital delights, but they did stress that loyalty to God which takes precedence over all that is cherished by man.[87] In consequence, marriage becomes under God a joint enterprise. The Puritan concept has altered not only the concept of marriage but of relations of the sexes in general, and that camaraderie which Continentals remark as peculiarly British is the fruit of Puritanism, which by putting God first has enabled men and women to labor together without consciousness of their biological differences.

At times the Puritan approach sounds all too unsentimental and utterly unromantic. Puritans ordinarily would not marry because they had fallen in love. They fell in love because they were married. Occasionally they appear all too dutiful about it, as when John Knox referred to his fiancée as "she whom God hath offered to me and commanded me to love as my own flesh."[88] Nor was John Calvin the least disposed to romance when he stipulated to a friend the conditions which he desired in a mate. "I am not of that insane class of

lovers who, once captivated by beauty, kiss even its faults. The only comeliness that attracts me is this: that she be modest, complaisant, unostentatious, thrifty, patient, and likely to be careful of my health." His tribute to his wife after her death was another witness to the degree to which marriage was centered upon a common task. To a friend he wrote: "I have been bereaved of the best companion of my life, who, if our lot had been harsher, would have been not only the willing sharer of exile and poverty, but even of death. While she lived, she was the faithful helper of my ministry. From her I never experienced the slightest hindrance."[89]

Nevertheless the radical sectaries of the Reformation were after all not so frigid. The Puritan ideal for the relations of man and wife was summed up in the words, "a tender respectiveness." Surely there is no lack of warmth in the picture by Thomas Hooker:

> The man whose heart is endeared to the woman he loves, he dreams of her in the night, hath her in his eye and apprehension when he awakes, museth on

her as he sits at table, walks with her when he travels and parlies with her in each place where he comes. . . .

That the husband tenders his spouse with an endeared affection above all mortal creatures: This appears by the expressions of his respect, that all he hath, is at her command, all he can do, is wholly improved for her content and comfort, she lies in his bosom and his heart trusts in her, which forceth all to confess, that the stream of his affection, like a mighty current, runs with full tide and strength. . . . [90]

The love letters of Quakers are marked by a peculiar ardor of affection. Take for example this one from Ann Audland in 1654 to her husband, John Audland, aged twenty-four, absent on a Quaker mission:

I received thy letters and all my soul desireth is to hear from thee in the life. Dear heart, in life dwell, there I am with thee out of all time, out of all words, in the pure power of the Lord; there is my joy and strength. Oh, how I am refreshed to hear from thee, to hear of thy faithfulness and boldness in the work of the Lord . . . O, dear heart, go on conquering and to conquer, knowing this that thy crown is sure. So, dear heart, now is the time of the Lord's work, and few are willing to go forth into it. . . . But blessed be

the Lord for ever who hath called us from doing our own work into His great work. . . . Oh, it is past my utterance to express the joy I have for thee, I am full, I am full of love toward thee, never such love as this; the mighty power of the Lord go along with thee.[91]

Ten years after his marriage, William Penn, about to depart for Pennsylvania, wrote to his wife:

My dear wife, remember thou wast the love of my youth, and much the joy of my life; the most beloved, as well as the most worthy of all my earthly comforts; and the reason of that love was more thy inward than thy outward excellencies, which yet were many. God knows, and thou knowest it, I can say it was a match of Providence's making.[92]

The advice given by Puritan divines to married couples affords an interesting contrast to that given by St. Chrysostom, who assumed that the wife would be querulous and the husband the one to assuage her complaints. Thomas Gouge, a Puritan of the seventeenth century, in his counsels for domestic harmony recognized that the fault might be on both sides and the cure must be mutual. He gives this rule:

Labor continuously and keep down all furious passions, which do usually occasion discord and dissidence. Especially when one is passionate it will be the wisdom of the other to act patience and to express a spirit of meekness. For when both are hot and angry together, then the fire of contention is likely to increase to such a flame as will not suddenly be quenched. And therefore I would commend this rule to married persons: to beware of both being angry together, but rather let one be to the other like David's harp to appease Saul's fury.[93]

## Milton on Divorce

The attitude which these citations reveal makes obviously for the refinement of marriage. It may also make for instability. We have already observed that a lack of community in religion has in extreme cases been regarded as ground for divorce. John Milton was to go much further and to argue that a lack of community in taste, interest, and conviction vitiates and abrogates the union. Milton himself had made an unfortunate marriage in that as a man of bookish tastes thirty-five years of age, he had married a country lass of seventeen. After a year of ministering to a grave and sedentary

scholar, this girl, lonely for the bustle and convivialities of an English country house, returned to her people. Milton in his tract on divorce did not refer to his personal circumstances, though obviously they conditioned his thinking.

He began by saying that the first command of God was not, "Be fruitful and multiply" (the favorite text for the Catholic sacramental view), nor was it that "to marry is better than to burn" (the chief proof text of the Lutherans), but rather this, "It is not good for man to be alone." "In God's intention a meet and happy conversation is the chiefest and noblest end of marriage." "The chief society thereof is in the soul rather than in the body, and the greatest breach thereof is unfitness of mind rather than defect of body." "Since we know it is not the joining of another body will remove loneliness, but the uniting of another compliable mind; and that it is no blessing but a torment, nay a base and brutish condition to be one flesh, unless where nature can in some measure fix and unite the disposition." "Loneliness is the first thing which God's eye named not good." "There

is a peculiar comfort in the marriage state beside the genial bed, which no other society affords. No mortal nature can endure either in the actions of religion or study of wisdom, without sometime slackening the cords of intense thought and labor"; therefore we "have need of some delightful intermissions wherein the enlarged soul may leave off a while her severe schooling; which as she cannot well do without company, so in no company so well as where the different sex in most resembling unlikeness and most unlike resemblance cannot but please best, and be pleased in the aptitude of that variety." So fundamental indeed is community of taste, interest, and conviction for such a spiritual interchange that in Milton's judgment it were better both parties should be irreligious than that one should be religious and the other not.

If these conditions be not fulfilled, there is no real marriage. "What a violent and cruel thing it is to force the continuing of those together whom God and nature in the gentlest end of marriage never joined." He who misses the true end of marriage "by chancing on a mute and spiritless mate

remains more alone than before." "Suppose he erred. It is not the intent of God or man to hunt an error so to the death with a revenge beyond all measure and proportion." The magistrate is not the one to decide whether a marriage be successful. When a Roman was asked why he had put away his wife, he pulled off his shoe and said, "This shoe is a neat shoe, yet none of you know where it wrings me." The magistrate should take care only that the conditions of the divorce be not injurious. If two such spiritual persons as Paul and Barnabas found it wise to separate, shall the married be held "to the most intimate and incorporating duties of love and embracement . . . if unfitness and disparity be not till after marriage discovered?"[94]

## The Need for Stress on Marriage as a Sacrament

This survey thus far has shown a period of ascendance for each of three types, the sacramental, the romantic, and the companionable views of marriage up to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Thereafter one finds them varying according

to land and time. In the age of the Louis in France there was a reversion to the position of the courts of love. The term adultery went out of currency to be replaced by the euphemism "Monsieur this week is the lover of Madame So-and-So." The highest praise in one of the novels of the period that a husband ventured to bestow upon his wife was this, "She is perhaps the only one whom I should be able to love if she were not my wife." The story was told of a husband who was deeply in love with his wife, but dared not avow his affection for fear of ridicule, until to forestall a rival there was no other recourse. The married couple became very happy, though the butt of much mockery in their entourage.

In England the Restoration introduced no little of the French *moeurs* which continued in aristocratic circles well into the eighteenth century. The Victorian era restored Puritanism.

Germany was marked in the eighteenth century both by rationalism and pietism. Rationalism made much of the law of nature and for that reason ex-

alted marriage for the sake of progeny and the education of children.

The concept of the mutual aid of the partners was not excluded. In other words, the rationalist movement revived the ethic of Thomas Aquinas.

The other characteristic movement of the period was pietism, with great stress upon feeling. It was, however, religious feeling. The mystics revived the erotic mysticism of St. Bernard. Boehme directed his rhapsodic devotion to the divine Wisdom, Sophia. What all of this meant for human relations is difficult to assess. Zinzendorf endeavored to spiritualize marriage as the type of the relationship of Christ to the soul. The marriage bed he declared is as pure as the sacrament of the altar. Yet there should be no more enjoyment of sex in marriage than of wine in the sacrament. The resulting attitude was obviously closely akin to that of Thomas Muentzer.

One might have supposed that the romantic movement would have romanticized marriage, but that was scarcely the case for the Frenchman Rousseau who in his *La Nouvelle Héloise* starts out to

vindicate the rights of feeling but ends up with resignation. His fancy makes out of the first night of the lovers the perfect blending and consummation of physical desires, maturing friendship, and unfolding love in supreme unity. Then he renounces it all on the ground that to continue in marriage would be to lose the rapture. His heroine has to become the partner of another. Here is a plain relapse into the cult of the troubadours. It is not here that one is to turn for deepening concepts of the relationship of man and woman so much as to Goethe who in Faust discovered the redemptive power of woman's unconquerable love.[95]

The more recent years have been marked by a departure from Christian attitudes, a secularization of marriage. This is not to be confused with the attitude of the reformers who looked upon marriage as a civil contract. This they did only to insist that marriage is valid among non-Christians and in order to destroy the manipulation of marriages by the Church of Rome. The Puritans for a time, particularly in New England, would have only a civil ceremony. As late as 1685 a Huguenot minis-

ter in New England was fined for solemnizing marriage. But the future was with him and in 1692 legal authorization was obtained for a religious ceremony.[96] Since that time in the United States, despite the separation of church and state, the minister has come to serve in a double capacity at a wedding. He actually pronounces the couple man and wife by virtue of the authority vested in him by the state and at the same time confers the blessing of the church. The point of all this is simply that the Protestants were essentially as sacramental in the broad sense of the term as the Catholics. Secularization is not the proper word to apply to their position.

But secularization has occurred in that romance in certain quarters has been completely divorced from the sacramental. The pattern has come to be first, that if young people fall in love they should marry; second, unless they fall in love they should not marry; and third, that if having married they cease to be in love, they should dissolve the union. This of course is not the prevailing pattern of our culture, but it is a position all too commonly

found. Others have centered upon communion of tastes as the primary note in marriage and have argued that if such a ground of partnership should cease or should be discovered never to have existed, then also the union should be terminated. These two positions if pursued in isolation make for instability. However needful they may have been even in earlier times, the need in our day is for a renewed stress upon the sacramental aspects of marriage.

## Protestant and Catholic Views

In our own time Catholics and Protestants have clashed over the problem of birth control but are coming to be more nearly in accord with regard to the purposes of marriage. Catholics have always and do still condemn birth control by any other method than abstinence. Aquinas at this point was at one with Augustine and no less so was a Catholic humanist in the age of the Renaissance, Colucci Salutati. No difference between Catholics and Protestants developed on this score in the age of the

Reformation because the Protestants simply took over the traditional attitude.

The special conditions of modern society have occasioned the divergence. In colonial days in America perhaps not more than one quarter of the children grew to maturity. With the great improvement in public health, there is a reasonable expectation today that all will survive. There is then no need to have huge families in order to keep up the population. For that matter, in countries where infant mortality is still high, the birth rate is even more excessive and the growth of population creates a problem for the means of subsistence and has an ultimate bearing on the elimination of war.

Viewing the problem in this context, Protestants have come to endorse the principle of the limitation of families and to that end are willing to invoke technological aid to control the arrival of life. Here the Catholic Church has interposed a stout and unyielding opposition. The Catholics fail to realize that Protestants are not to be equated with the

Manichees and the Albigenses who wanted no children at all. To be sure there are those in our culture who seek to evade the responsibility of parenthood, but the great drive for birth control emanates not from these quarters so much as from those who are concerned for the health of the child and the mother, and for the problems of subsistence and war. The pope has in a recent encyclical essentially conceded the point, for in the Bull *Casti Connubii* he has agreed that there may be sexual relations even without the intention of progeny, provided no mechanical device is employed to impede conception.[97] The objection is not to birth control but to technology.

In another area, Catholics and Protestants are drawing closer because many Catholic writers, both abroad and in this country, have come to feel that all too exclusive emphasis in marriage on procreation and the remedy for sin obscures the very real and enriching secondary ends of delight in mutual association, companionability, and partnership in joint endeavors.[98]

In summary, we have observed that the sacramental view of marriage was elaborated in the early church and the Middle Ages. The romantic concept began outside of marriage in the courts of love of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in southern France and was combined with marriage in the age of the Renaissance. The view of marriage as companionship was peculiarly the work of the radical Protestant sects. Each of the three concepts has its validity. The sacramental view makes for stability, the romantic and the companionable for refinement. They can be combined in a union which commences alike in mutual love and loyalty to God and continues in lifelong fidelity and common labor in the work of the Lord.

# FOOTNOTES

1. Emil Schuerer, *A History of the Jewish People,* I, 1 (1891), p. 455.
2. R. H. Bainton, "Immoralities of the Patriarchs," *Harvard Theological Review* XXIII (January, 1930), 39-49.
3. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* Article "Sodomy."
4. Werner Jaeger, *Paideia* II, pp. 181-182 citing Plato, *Laws* 636 cf.
5. Adolf Harnack, "Origines zur Bibel," *Texte und Untersuchungen* XLII, 4 (1919), 122.
6. Karl Mueller, *Die Ehelosigkeit aller getauften in der alten Kirche* (1927).
7. "Exhortation to Chastity," XII, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (abbr. *A. N. F.*), IV, 56.
8. "To His Wife," V, *A. N. F.* IV, 41.
9. "Apparel of Women," II, 4, *A. N. F.* IV, 20.
10. Karl Mueller, "Ehelosigkeit."
11. *Demonstratio Ev.* 29b-30b cited in C. J. Cadoux, *Early Church and the World* (1925), 469.
12. *P. N. F.* VI, 14 (i.e., *Post-Nicene Fathers*).
13. Fliche et Martin, *Histoire de l'Eglise* III (1936), 408.

14. *P. N. F.* VI, 345.
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16. *P. N. F.* VI, 248.
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